

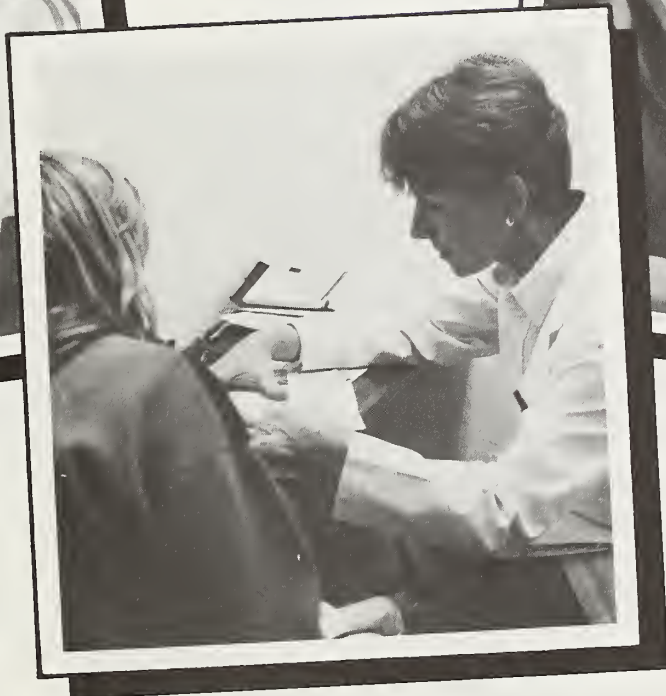
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Food & Nutrition

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**A look at some
state and local initiatives...**

States Strengthen Work And Training Programs

Efforts to link public assistance benefits with work have gained acceptance steadily in recent years. State, county, and local governments have been experimenting with ways to reduce individuals' long-term dependence on public assistance, and the success of those experiments has led to increased public and Congressional support for work and training programs.

In the Food Stamp Program, work requirements for recipients are not new. Since 1971, there has been a requirement that able-bodied adults register for work with their food stamp office.

In 1977 legislation, Congress gave states the option of requiring food stamp work registrants to search for jobs, and then in 1981, authorized any political subdivision in any state to operate a workfare program. As of 1986, 40 states had implemented the job search requirement, and 21 jurisdictions were operating food stamp workfare programs.

This spring new regulations, which expand and improve food stamp work efforts, went into effect. States must now operate an employment and training program to help food stamp work registrants prepare for and obtain work.

Approximately 10 percent of all food stamp recipients fit the criteria for these employment and training rules. In general, food stamp work registrants who are between the ages of 18 and 60 and who are physically and mentally able will be required to comply with the new rules.

Sixteen- and 17-year-olds must also comply if they are heads of households and do not attend school or are not enrolled in an employment training program at least half-time.

However, the rules allow a number of exemptions within these general criteria. For example, people who care for young children or incapacitated adults are exempted. Additionally, states are given latitude to exempt other individuals or categories of individuals for whom they deem participation in an employment and training program impractical.

Of the 19 million people currently

participating in the Food Stamp Program nationwide, about 1.9 million are affected by the employment and training rules.

Because states are allowed flexibility in designing their programs, employment and training programs vary from state to state. Yet every state's program includes at least one or more work training, work experience, or job search activities, which are defined as "components".

As states gain more experience and discover which components are most successful in promoting food stamp recipients' employability, their employment and training programs can change and improve. Components may be added, revised, or dropped to fit the needs of the state's recipient population and labor market.

Early Efforts in South Carolina Offer Valuable Framework

Before the food stamp employment and training rules became effective in April this year, the South Carolina Department of Social Services had already gained extensive experience in operating various work and training programs associated with both the food stamp and AFDC programs.

Within the Department, there has been a longstanding commitment to finding ways of breaking the cycle of poverty and dependency.

The needs of the people the Department serves are great. In South Carolina, 10.8 percent of the population receives food stamps, and 3.7 percent receives AFDC benefits. The state has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the country, with 25 percent of its citizens

functionally illiterate, and it has the nation's highest teenage pregnancy rate.

State officials estimate that 80 percent of public aid recipients could benefit from services designed to help them become economically self-sufficient. For that reason, South Carolina has often been in the forefront of testing new approaches to help recipients achieve economic independence.

Workfare is one approach used

When Congress authorized demonstration projects to test workfare in the Food Stamp Program, two South Carolina counties were among the first to sign up for the project. One was an urban county, Greenville, which began operating its food stamp workfare program in 1981. The county government of Greenville has continued to sponsor workfare ever since the demonstration phase ended.

Under workfare, eligible food stamp work registrants are required to work at jobs with public or private nonprofit agencies to earn part or all of their household's monthly food stamp allotment. If a workfare participant fails to comply with workfare requirements, the participant's household is ineligible to receive food stamps for 2 months or until a member of the household satisfies all outstanding workfare obligations.

"In Greenville, we wanted to place food stamp recipients in a work atmosphere so they could get back on track with employment," says Sharon Smith, county workfare director. "We decided to test workfare to see if the benefits outweighed the administrative costs. So far they have."

According to Smith, the county's average monthly savings from workfare range from \$28,000 to \$35,000. These savings are computed based on the value of the job services performed by participants and the amount of food stamp benefits not issued due to participants finding jobs or being sanctioned.

"Our county, as a whole, has been very receptive to workfare," says Smith.

A highly cohesive group of public



A food stamp recipient (above) goes on a job search after being instructed by South Carolina Department of Social Services staff on techniques for finding work. Midlands Technical College is one educational institution providing training to public aid recipients.



and private human service agencies have provided job sites and the necessary supervisory support. Among the organizations providing jobs are the county government, five city governments, the Greenville hospital system, the Greenville County school system, the Urban League, Meals on Wheels, the YMCA and YWCA, the Greenville County Recreation Commission, Greenville Technical College, and others.

These organizations furnish on-the-job training to workfare participants, supervise their work, and maintain records and reports required by the workfare program.

Participants work in a variety of jobs

In an average month, about 185 people are employed at workfare job

sites. Smith places participants in jobs at work sites closest to their homes since many of them do not have transportation. Unless participants have transportation and request a particular type of job because of prior work experience, they are always assigned to a site within 2 miles of their home.

Participants work as clerks, secretaries, hospital aides, cafeteria workers, child care assistants, building maintenance workers, data entry assistants, and recreational aides, as well as in various other types of jobs.

People placed in jobs with the school system or with hospitals have had the most success in converting to permanent jobs with their workfare employers. "Schools and hospitals have been particularly good in working with clients," explains Sharon Smith. "They're willing to give a chance to cli-

ents who show an interest and willingness to work."

Recipient satisfaction with jobs at these locations and the availability of vacancies are factors that have also facilitated the transition from workfare to paid employment.

The majority of Greenville's workfare participants are women, and most have prior work experience. Smith has found that women over 30 are the most willing to comply with workfare requirements. Younger women, she says, often don't value work in the same way older women do.

Other approaches have also been used

Workfare is just one approach South Carolina staff have tried in their efforts

Working in a Greenville, South Carolina, workfare program, a food stamp recipient (right) learns food service skills. Many public and private social service agencies, including hospitals and schools, have provided jobs to workfare participants.



to increase recipients' self-esteem and employability. In addition to the food stamp workfare programs operating in two counties, two other counties implemented the AFDC's version of workfare, known as the Community Work Experience Program.

Counties without food stamp workfare elected to implement job search programs, which assist and encourage food stamp recipients to find paying jobs on their own.

New approaches to skills training have also been tried. Because illiteracy poses a major problem for the state, developing recipients' reading skills ranks high on the Department's priority list. The Intergenerational Reading Program is one especially innovative example of how the Department of Social Services has addressed illiteracy.

In this nationally recognized program, college students, who receive training in a phonic reading method, tutor welfare mothers so that the mothers can learn to read and pass the skill along to their children, thus breaking the chain of family illiteracy.

One mother, a fifth generation welfare recipient, is reading at the third grade level after being enrolled in the program for only 1 year. Recently she enrolled her two daughters in the reading program with her.

What has been learned from past experiences with employment and training programs? "I don't know of any approach we've tried in South Carolina that hasn't worked," says Bernice Scott, state food stamp employment and training coordinator.

"Whatever you try must depend on your population. In general, we've found the most successful programs are those designed specifically for a particular group of people." She cites as an example the state's home health aide project, which was targeted specifically to AFDC mothers with children over 12 and which was started with particular jobs in mind.

New state office coordinates services

According to Scott, staff at the Department of Social Services have had strong support from the top in all these

efforts. The Department's commissioner, James Solomon, Jr., is a strong advocate of programs that foster self-sufficiency. Two years ago, he established a state Office of Self-Sufficiency to bring all work support services provided by the Department under one division.

The creation of the state office was the first step toward integration of all Department of Social Services' employment and training services down to the local level. Four local work support units have already been set up, serving clusters of counties with high numbers of public assistance recipients.

The South Carolina legislature gave added support to the Department's efforts by passing the "South Carolina Employables Program Act" during its 1986 session.

The law specifies that public assistance recipients must register for and accept appropriate employment as a condition of receipt of benefits. It also designates the Department of Social Services as the agency authorized to conduct demonstration projects de-

signed to expand employment opportunities for assistance recipients.

After establishing the Office of Self-Sufficiency, Commissioner Solomon appointed a 30-member Business and Industrial Advisory Committee to provide guidance about the operation of work support services. The committee is comprised of executives from leading South Carolina industries, such as the textile industry, utility companies, and retail sales firms.

"I can't begin to tell you how important this committee is," says Mary Frances Payton, state director of work support services. "You've got to have the business community behind you. We've found that business leaders are ready to put food stamp and AFDC recipients to work in South Carolina."

Recipients asked about their needs

One of the committee's first recommendations was that the Department conduct a needs assessment of food stamp and AFDC recipients. A random

sample of 500 clients in counties with local work support units was selected, and these recipients were asked to identify obstacles to their seeking and finding employment.

Lack of training, limited education, and problems in reading and completing job applications ranked as leading reasons preventing recipients from working. Lack of child care was cited as a reason by 25 percent of those responding. Only 3 percent of those surveyed said they were not interested in looking for work.

"This assessment really opened our eyes to what people felt were their needs," says Payton.

To make maximum use of the resources already available, Commissioner Solomon directed his staff not to duplicate services but to link other agencies' services into the Department's work support system.

In keeping with this goal, the Department signed cooperative agreements with several agencies, including agencies dealing with literacy, adult educa-

The South Carolina Department of Social Services has a number of innovative training programs. Here, a college student tutors a welfare recipient in the Intergenerational Reading Program.



tion, mental health, vocational rehabilitation, employment services, and alcohol and drug abuse treatment.

Local work support staff conduct evaluations of recipients and refer them to the programs or services within this agency network that will help them become "job ready."

Previous efforts will be valuable

Experiences with various work programs will be valuable to Department of Social Services staff in building a food stamp employment and training program.

As Bernice Scott explains, for the first 6 months under the new rules, their emphasis is on job search and placement assistance. "Greenville's workfare program has been retained," she says, "but job search activities have been given a higher priority in the county." She foresees changes in and expansion of the state's food stamp employment and training program during the coming years.

Both Scott and Payton believe food stamp recipients are receptive to the new rules. "When people see you are really going to help them, word gets around, and they cooperate with you," Payton says.

Regardless of what it takes—workfare, job search, or skills training—the employees of the Department of Social Services are determined to help end the cycle of poverty and dependency trapping so many of South Carolina's citizens.

Says Payton, "Profit is not just measured in terms of money. It's honorable to work. We cannot afford to have another generation of children grow up without a work ethic and without role models for work."

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*article by Brenda Schuler
photos by the South Carolina
Department of Social Services*

Group Support Is Key to Camden's Job Search Club

Standing in front of a class of 20 people, a woman told her story.

She had graduated from high school in 1968, and afterwards had worked as a secretary. She got married and continued working until her first child was born. Her husband made enough money to support them, so she was able to stay home and be a fulltime mother.

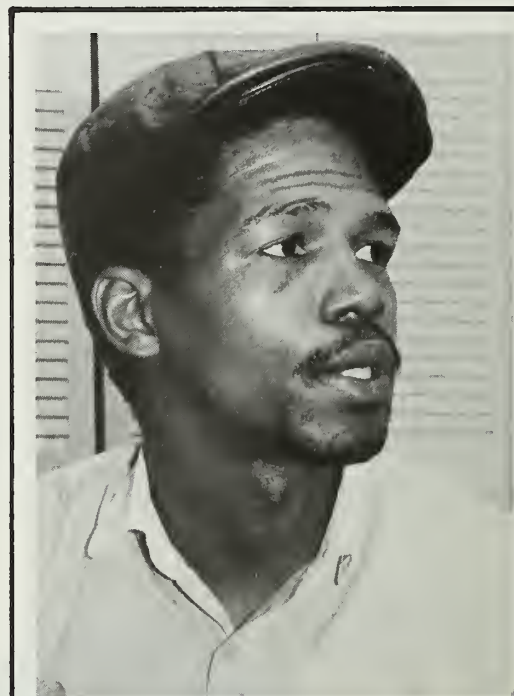
When she became a widow a little over 2 years ago, things changed. She found herself on social security and on food stamps. She was alone and solely responsible for her family, which had, by then, grown to five children. She thought about work and decided to get some training to improve her basic secretarial skills.

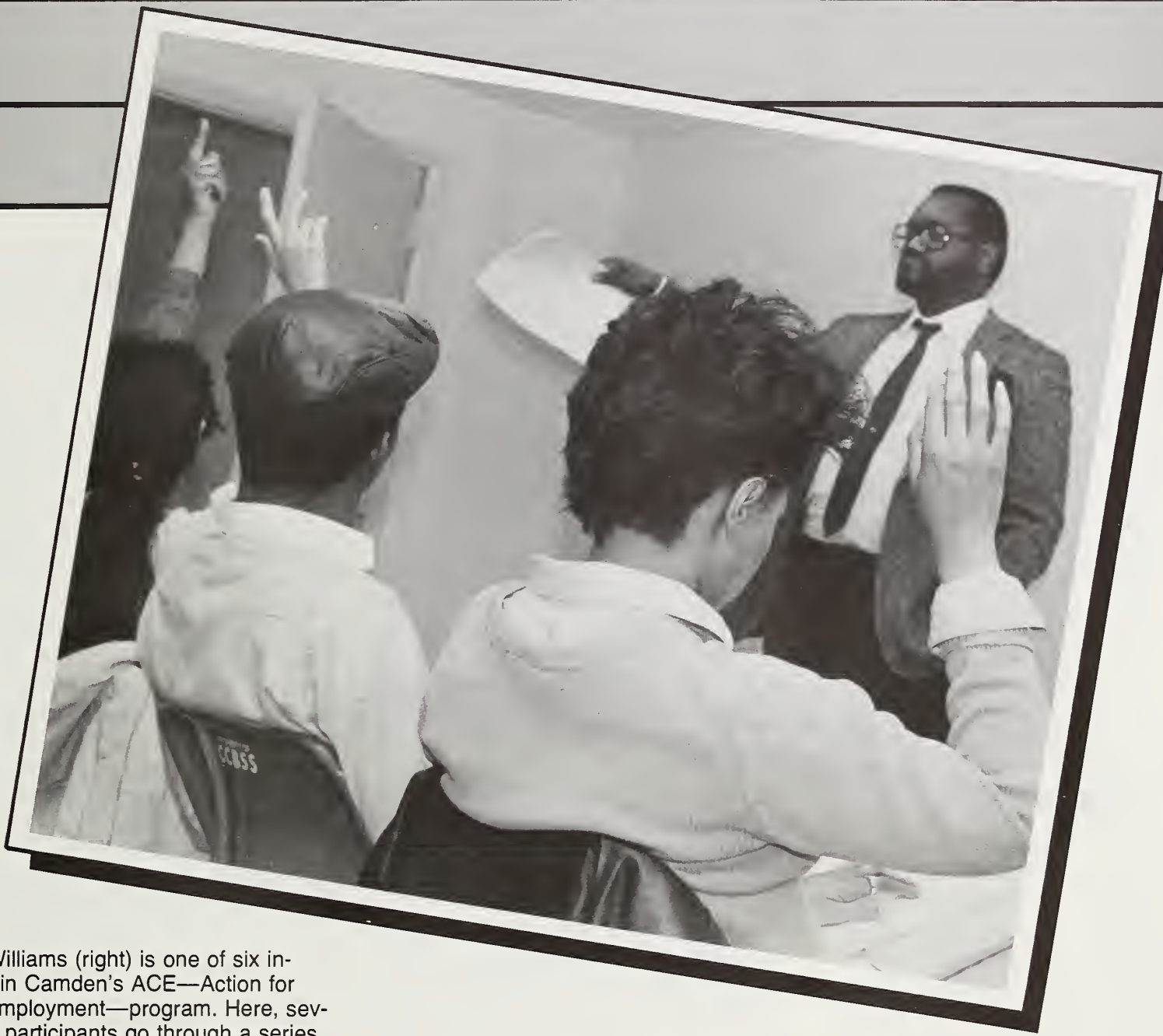
As she spoke, everyone listened intently. They knew that each would have a turn to stand up and speak out about what it's like to be unemployed or looking for a job.

The young woman and her classmates were participating in a very special job search club, run by the Camden, New Jersey, Employment and Training Division. The purpose of the 2-week club is to help food stamp, welfare, and unemployment compensation benefit recipients find work.

"In order to continue receiving food stamp benefits, non-exempt food stamp recipients must register for our employment and training program," says Frank Ambrose, Camden's food stamp job search coordinator.

"Most of these people, except for a few, have to actively look for a job. We call it 'self-directed job search.' If they don't find some kind of work within a certain period of time, they are then required to come to our job search club."





Reggie Williams (right) is one of six instructors in Camden's ACE—Action for Career Employment—program. Here, several ACE participants go through a series of exercises aimed at building their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Helping recipients help themselves

"What makes our job club different from other clubs is our training classes," says Ambrose. "We have what we call ACE—Action for Career Employment. ACE is built on the idea that the key to finding a job is personal confidence and self-esteem."

Ambrose explains that many people on food stamps and welfare really want to work but, because they lack self-esteem, have difficulty communicating their strengths and talents to employers.

"With the ACE program," he says, "we attempt to build self-confidence, self-discipline, self-expression, and self-awareness."

With each session, participants progress through a series of exercises, all aimed at building self-confidence. Participants give speeches to the class, practice introducing themselves to

strangers they may meet at a bus stop or while food shopping, and openly discuss with the rest of the class their fears about work or rejection.

"What we try to do," says Ambrose, "is to get participants to start visualizing themselves as successful—picturing themselves in a job, getting a paycheck, and so on."

"Unlike most job clubs," he continues, "we don't spend the bulk of our time orienting clients on the technical aspects of finding a job, like dressing appropriately, filling out applications, writing letters, or resumes."

"We learned that this approach was particularly self-defeating for food stamp or welfare recipients who are faced with the reality of answering questions such as, 'What is your work history?' or 'What have you done over the past 2 or 3 or 5 years?'"

ACE instructors strive to motivate participants to be aggressive about

plans of action
Time frame
ENERGY
Affirmation



Frank Ambrose, Camden's food stamp job search coordinator, talks about ACE at a conference on training.

finding a job—to call or visit employers in order to convince them they are “right” for a particular position. To accomplish this, Ambrose and his staff continually focus on the positive.

“You have to ignore the negatives,” Ambrose says, “especially those things we all keep hearing about in the news called ‘barriers to employment,’ like transportation, child care, or resumes.

“If someone really wants to work, the ‘barriers’ can be dealt with. One thing we, as program administrators, can do is to all work a little harder to discard the notion of ‘barriers.’”

Group support helpful to many

During the second week of the ACE program, the class meets at the New Jersey State Bureau of Employment Services building in Camden. “At this site, we run two major activities,” says Ambrose, “Unemployment Anonymous and a telephone bank.”

Unemployment Anonymous works on the same principle as Alcoholics Anonymous or Overeaters Anonymous. Participants talk about what it's like to be out of a job, have no money, or live on welfare, and they give each other valuable support.

Former ACE participants who were successful in finding jobs are invited to come and speak at these sessions. “This is the best medicine you can find for the class,” says Ambrose. “There is nothing like someone who recently found a job coming back and talking about it.”

The telephone bank also offers group support. During this activity, participants accelerate their job search efforts by devoting 3 or 4 hours a day to making calls to employers. The atmosphere is one of enthusiasm and mutual support.

“The group support is there when you go to make that first contact with an employer,” says Ambrose. “It's a lot easier to begin dialing those phone numbers when someone else is right there doing it, too.”

Efforts have been successful

The training has gotten results. “In 1986, our success rate with food stamp recipients was enormous,” says Ambrose. “We led all of New Jersey's 21 counties in job placements last year.”

Of the 550 Camden, New Jersey, food stamp work registrants, 192 participated in the ACE program. Of those

192, 132 found jobs or went on to special training programs sponsored by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA).

According to Ambrose, ACE graduates found all types of jobs, including jobs as cashiers, computer operators, accounting clerks, chamber maids, road crew laborers, carpenters, word processors, and others.

The ACE program has been operating in its present form since 1985, when several different state, county, and city agencies combined their job search programs into one cohesive job club.

“We realized we all had the same goal for our participants,” says Ambrose. “We all wanted to help them find jobs, and we realized we were more or less doing the same things for different sets of people.

“We had to convince a lot of people, including county officials, to try this new approach. But when we invited them to sit in on a class, the opponents were quickly won over when they saw the dynamic nature of ACE.”

For counties and cities who are considering a results-oriented job search program for food stamp recipients, Ambrose sums up his experiences with this:

“In the past 2 years, I've learned three things about launching an effective job search program. First, remember that the participants come first—we're here to help them find jobs.

“Second, share existing resources at the county or local level as much as possible. And, third, just keep going. Don't let anything prevent you from putting together the type of program that you think will work for participants in your particular area.”

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*article by Cynthia Bumber
photos by Marian Wig*

Highlights of New Food Stamp Employment and Training Rules

The Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198) requires every state agency administering the Food Stamp Program to have an employment and training program for food stamp recipients.

The purpose of the requirement is to ensure that able-bodied food stamp recipients pursue meaningful work-related activities leading to paid employment and a decreased dependency on assistance programs.

What are states' responsibilities in designing employment and training programs?

States have the flexibility to design employment and training programs that meet their particular needs, provided that their programs contain one or more of the following components: job search; work experience; and/or training to improve employability.

What is job search?

In job search, food stamp work registrants inquire about employment and report the results of these inquiries to a designated agency, usually the local employment services office or, in some cases, the local food stamp office.

The state agency determines the number of employers the food stamp recipient must contact and the period of time job search activities are to be conducted.

This component may also include job search training, such as job skills assessment, job finding clubs, and job placement services.

What is work experience?

In work experience, recipients are assigned to jobs that provide experience and/or training at the same time that valuable services are provided to the community.

Workfare may be included in the work experience component; however, work experience offers flexibility beyond that offered by workfare.

For example, workfare is mandatory in jurisdictions where it is operated, while work experience may be voluntary.

In both workfare and work experience, the jobs are usually part-time. The maximum number of hours worked per month is based on the food stamp allotment divided by the minimum wage.

What sort of training may be provided to improve employability?

In addition to job search training, vocational job skills training may be provided through a Job Training Partnership (JTPA) project, a vocational education agency, or a community-based organization. Basic education courses may also be offered.

Which food stamp recipients must participate?

With some exceptions, able-bodied food stamp recipients who are not employed full-time are required to register for work with their state welfare or employment services office. States' employment and training programs are designed to help these people prepare for and obtain work.

In general, food stamp registrants who are between the ages of 18 and 60 and who are physically and mentally able will be required to comply with the new rules.

Sixteen- and 17-year-olds must also comply if they are heads of households and do not attend school or are not enrolled in an employment training program at least half-time.

Recipients who are exempt from the work registration requirement are also exempt from the employment and training rules. In addition, states may exempt other individuals or categories of individuals for whom participation in

an employment and training program is deemed impracticable.

How many hours must food stamp recipients spend in employment and training activities?

Recipients who must participate in employment and training programs may be required to spend up to 120 hours per month in employment and training activities. However, for those recipient households participating in work experience or workfare, the number of hours of participation cannot exceed the number of hours equal to the household's food stamp benefits divided by the minimum wage.

Are there penalties for food stamp recipients who do not comply with the employment and training rules?

Failure to fulfill either the work registration or the employment and training requirement results in a 2-month disqualification from the Food Stamp Program for the household member who does not comply.

If the person who fails to comply is the head of the household, the entire household is disqualified for 2 months.

The rules are slightly different for workfare programs which are conducted under the provisions of Section 20 of the Food Stamp Act. With these programs, if *any* household member participating in workfare fails to comply, the entire household is disqualified for 2 months.

May states change their employment and training programs?

States are required to submit employment and training plans to the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for approval annually for the next 2 fiscal years and biennially thereafter.

States may change their plans, within regulatory guidelines and with FNS approval, at any time. As they gain more experience and as changes in the job market and their recipient populations occur, they may want to revise their plans significantly.

Currently, states are operating under interim employment and training plans covering the period April 1 through September 30, 1987.

Counties Share Ideas And Information

California Food Stamp Staff Work Together on Local Problems

In California, 58 counties run the Food Stamp Program and sometimes approach the same problem 58 different ways. But county staff, at regional workshops around the state, are turning this diversity into a source of ideas for preventing errors and taking corrective action.

"County staff need to get together to share ideas and capitalize on their varied experience," says Charlie Marvin, chief corrective action officer for California's Food Stamp Program.

California's size and its county-administered structure have limited those opportunities for eligibility workers and their supervisors, according to Marvin. Three years ago, he and his staff began encouraging counties to get together and come up with ideas to bring error rates down.

All counties have since had an opportunity to participate in at least one of nine regional workshops. Marvin has been pleased with the results.

"We wanted people to develop enthusiasm about their role in error reduction. To do that, we had to let them know how important reducing errors is, and how important they are in the process.

"People working at the county level have to understand that they *can* have an impact on the error rate," Marvin says.

The first workshops brought county corrective action officers and supervisors together to discuss error reduction in all county-administered welfare programs. Recently, the trend has

been to bring in more eligibility technicians and their supervisors, and several workshops have targeted food stamp errors.

Involving staff has been worthwhile

Involving eligibility workers and supervisors is critical to the process, says Marvin. "These people see where errors are occurring, and where they can be prevented. Sometimes they just need an opportunity to pull back from their everyday efforts to see what exactly they can do."

Linda McMahon, director of the California Department of Social Services, says she has been very impressed with the products coming out of workshops that have included eligibility workers.

"The products are so practical, so down to the issue of what you can do on a day-to-day basis—not just concepts," she says.

The work products can be anything from a better form to an outline for a process. Several workshops have produced "how to" desk guides to help eligibility technicians get through all the right questions for food stamps, AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), general assistance, and Medi-Cal (California's Medicaid program).

An idea from one workshop was picked up by three counties. The

counties now include special bulletins in the same envelope they mail recipients' food stamp authorization cards. The bulletins provide opportunities to reinforce recipients' reporting responsibilities.

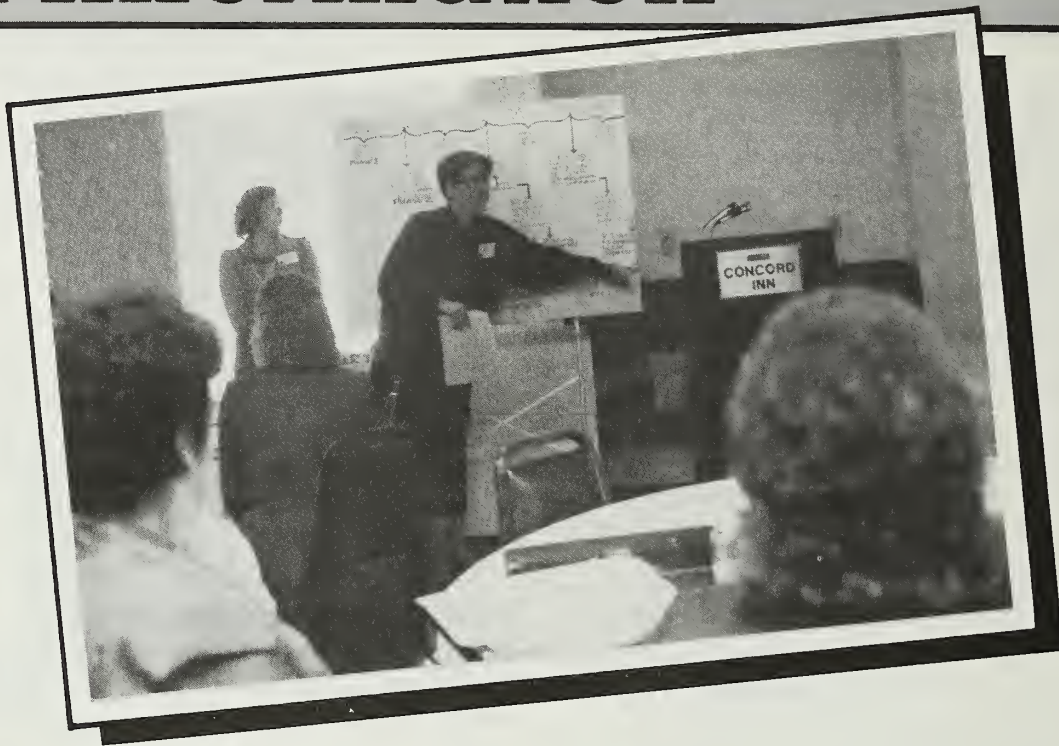
Counties organize workshops themselves

From the start, the workshops have been organized by the counties themselves. Marvin attended the first workshop, which was initiated by a group of counties in southern California. He liked the idea so much that he began encouraging other groups of counties to sponsor their own corrective action workshops.

According to Marvin, the counties have always been responsive to putting on the regional workshops. "We could do the workshops for them," he says, "or even provide facilitators if they need it. But we really want them to buy into the process."

He says that when county people present the workshops they generate enthusiasm which participants pick up on. "It gives participants a sense of ownership of the process as well as of the products."

County staff development trainers or line supervisors serve as facilitators, and can use materials developed in previous workshops to plan and organize their sessions. The materials in-



Left: Penny Jacobs of San Mateo County summarizes her group's suggestions for training eligibility workers. Right: A team representing four counties prepares a presentation.



clude outlines for the training, the exercises used, and handouts given to participants. Few other materials are needed, beyond large pads of paper and marking pens.

Participants work on assignments

Each workshop has three 1-day sessions, with breaks of 1 to 2 weeks in between for participants to complete assignments on work products.

The first day begins with exercises designed to "break the ice" among participants, as well as help the group focus on the task at hand. Participants are asked to identify sources of errors, looking beneath the surface to what they see as the core problem. They then throw out problems that cannot be solved at their actual working level.

"This stage is crucial to produce a constructive atmosphere," says Marvin. "People can't change how the federal or state government works, but they can look at what happens in their own offices, and see areas that they can strengthen."

Once the participants identify a group of core problems, they choose five or six issues to work on. They then break into groups of 5 to 10 people to work on the issue in which they're most interested.

Participants spend the remainder of the sessions and between meetings

working with their groups to develop work products that offer concrete, usable assistance to staff in preventing errors.

On the final day of the workshop, the groups present their ideas to their county welfare directors. State and regional FNS staff frequently attend the presentations. Linda McMahon attends the presentations and addresses the participants.

She underscores the importance of reducing errors and the key role county staff play in making improvements. "To me, corrective action really means good management," she told one group recently. "It's just doing a good job every day."

Results shared among counties

Results of the workshops don't end with the presentations. Final written versions of the groups' work products are sent to state staff several weeks later. The state then circulates descriptions of the work products to all county directors. State consultants, who participate in the workshops as often as possible, also share the ideas coming out of the workshops as they work with counties around the state.

Participants also bring back the ideas developed in their own group

and by others for use in their own counties. Marvin says that although the work products are sometimes modified by the counties when implemented, the fact that they have sparked new ideas is a sign of success.

Often, participants stay in contact with people from other counties they met during the workshop, and continue to share ideas.

Marvin suggests some kind of followup to the meetings 6 months to a year after the initial workshops. Some regional groups have continued to meet on a regular basis to see how the products are working and look at new concepts for preventing and correcting errors.

"We have several more workshops planned for this spring and summer, and we're glad to offer assistance to other states interested in the workshops," says Marvin.

For more information, contact: Charlie Marvin, Chief Corrective Action Bureau California Department of Social Services 744 P Street, Mail Station 16-30 Sacramento, California 95814 Telephone: (916) 445-4458

*article and photos
by Dee Amaden*

Volunteers Help Their Network

Volunteers in Arizona Build Successful Food Bank Network

The Westside Food Bank in Surprise, Arizona, is regarded as something of a model food distribution organization because of the efficiency with which it coordinates direct food assistance throughout almost a quarter of the state.

According to director Bill Ennis, Westside is successful because of the 600 people who staff the main facility and the more than 100 local food distribution sites. With very, very few exceptions, they're volunteers.

According to Ennis, Westside uses more volunteers, in more kinds of jobs, than any food bank he knows of.

"While our distribution is the largest of the food banks in Arizona," he says, "our paid staff is the smallest.

"We use volunteers in every area of the program, including setting policy at the board level." Only four or five of the 600 people on the regular staff are paid. Another 4,000 to 5,000 volunteers help with Westside's gleaning programs.

Part of a statewide food bank network

Westside is part of a statewide network of five food banks that have joined together to get USDA-donated commodities and other food to low-income Arizonans.

This year, the food banks will distribute more than \$10 million worth of food to more than 70,000 families, reaching every county in the state.

Of the five food banks, Westside

serves the largest geographic area, including Coconino, Yavapai, Mohave, La Paz, Yuma, and some parts of Maricopa County. In a typical month, the food bank will collect, store, and ship out as much as 700,000 pounds of food for distribution to some 15,000 families.

Handling that much food, Westside's loading dock is a busy place. Every day volunteers driving station wagons and trucks arrive to pick up food to replenish the shelves of local food pantries.

Trucks ranging from farmers' pickups to large interstate rigs pull in to drop off donations. Federal commodities, which account for a third to sometimes half of the food Westside distributes each month, arrive from USDA.

Mammoth commercial rigs deliver infant formula and a variety of other products donated by manufacturers. Food also arrives from Second Harvest, a nationwide nonprofit food clearinghouse, and from local grocers, who donate day-old baked goods and other foodstuffs. Westside's own trucks deliver fresh produce from Arizona and California.

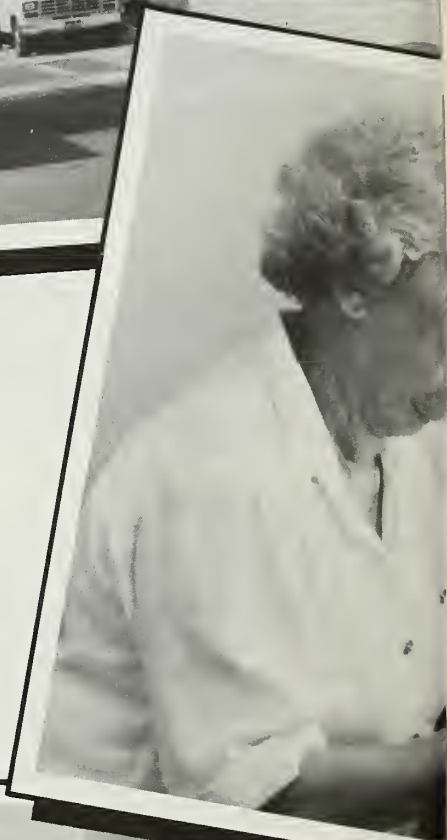
Food is carefully sorted and stored

Once on the premises, the food is sorted and prepared for shipment. In the main storage room, shelves up to the two-story ceiling are packed with cases of donated goods. There's also a cold storage room for frozen products awaiting shipment.

In some cases, foods are processed to make them easier to handle. For example, some of the oranges are juiced and the juice frozen in plastic bottles. Some of the apples are frozen and packed in plastic bags, while others are made into canned applesauce.

Everything is spotless and meets or exceeds commercial industry standards. Ennis and his volunteer staff are often visited by the food bank's private food industry contributors.

"These firms have invested a tremendous amount in their product's reputation and want to make sure that



Volunteers Help Get Food To Their Neighbors

Volunteers in Arizona Build Successful Food Bank Network

The Westside Food Bank in Surprise, Arizona, is regarded as something of a model food distribution organization because of the efficiency with which it coordinates direct food assistance throughout almost a quarter of the state.

According to director Bill Ennis, Westside is successful because of the 600 people who staff the main facility and the more than 100 local food distribution sites. With very, very few exceptions, they're volunteers.

According to Ennis, Westside uses more volunteers, in more kinds of jobs, than any food bank he knows of.

"While our distribution is the largest of the food banks in Arizona," he says, "our paid staff is the smallest.

"We use volunteers in every area of the program, including setting policy at the board level." Only four or five of the 600 people on the regular staff are paid. Another 4,000 to 5,000 volunteers help with Westside's gleaning programs.

Part of a statewide food bank network

Westside is part of a statewide network of five food banks that have joined together to get USDA-donated commodities and other food to low-income Arizonans.

This year, the food banks will distribute more than \$10 million worth of food to more than 70,000 families, reaching every county in the state.

Of the five food banks, Westside

serves the largest geographic area, including Coconino, Yavapai, Mohave, La Paz, Yuma, and some parts of Maricopa County. In a typical month, the food bank will collect, store, and ship out as much as 700,000 pounds of food for distribution to some 15,000 families.

Handling that much food, Westside's loading dock is a busy place. Every day volunteers driving station wagons and trucks arrive to pick up food to replenish the shelves of local food pantries.

Trucks ranging from farmers' pickups to large interstate rigs pull in to drop off donations. Federal commodities, which account for a third to sometimes half of the food Westside distributes each month, arrive from USDA.

Mammoth commercial rigs deliver infant formula and a variety of other products donated by manufacturers. Food also arrives from Second Harvest, a nationwide nonprofit food clearinghouse, and from local grocers, who donate day-old baked goods and other foodstuffs. Westside's own trucks deliver fresh produce from Arizona and California.

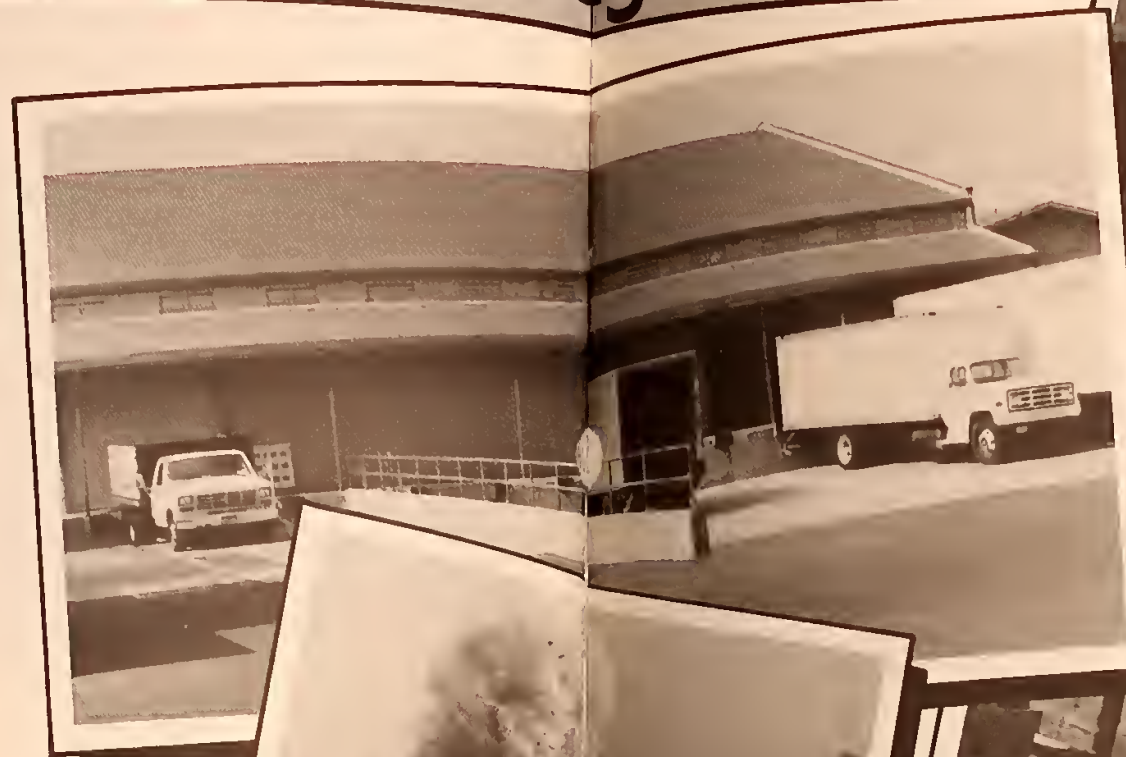
Food is carefully sorted and stored

Once on the premises, the food is sorted and prepared for shipment. In the main storage room, shelves up to the two-story ceiling are packed with cases of donated goods. There's also a cold storage room for frozen products awaiting shipment.

In some cases, foods are processed to make them easier to handle. For example, some of the oranges are juiced and the juice frozen in plastic bottles. Some of the apples are frozen and packed in plastic bags, while others are made into canned applesauce.

Everything is spotless and meets or exceeds commercial industry standards. Ennis and his volunteer staff are often visited by the food bank's private food industry contributors.

"These firms have invested a tremendous amount in their product's reputation and want to make sure that



Food from USDA and commercial donors fills Westside's large warehouse. Volunteers (left and below) work in a variety of jobs, ranging from office work to checking and packaging food for distribution to families.



what the public receives from us is of the same quality as they'd purchase at the supermarket."

Ennis is proud of Westside's own good reputation and makes sure that his volunteers know their contribution is what makes the operation a success.

"I think a lot of times volunteers are treated as incidental to a program," he says. "They are actually the key and need to be treated that way."

The appreciation and attention the volunteers receive begins with their initial contact with Westside. The first thing they do is complete a three-page questionnaire about their job skills and interests.

"We screen the volunteers to help us guide them into a job that will be rewarding to them, and us, and something they will enjoy," Ennis says.

Volunteers work in variety of jobs

There are a variety of jobs involved in collecting food, placing it in the hands of recipients, and taking care of all the administrative work in between. Volunteers do computer programming, data entry, and clerical and reception work; interview and screen clients; sort, box, and store food; work in the warehouse; and make pick ups and deliveries.

When they join Westside, volunteers receive a general orientation and then specific training in the job they'll be doing. Anyone who will be handling food, for example, gets several hours training on safe food handling.

All volunteers work at least one 4-hour shift each week, from 8 a.m. to noon or from noon to 4 p.m. Some work almost full-time. As much as pos-



Westside schedules volunteers in teams to make working an enjoyable, social experience. Many are retirees who live nearby.

sible, they're scheduled in teams so that the work is an enjoyable, social experience.

The extra consideration has paid off in terms of a committed, experienced workforce with little turnover and, therefore, little need for ongoing recruiting or training. Some of the volunteers are veterans with more than even Bill Ennis' 8½ years of experience.

"Any recruiting is through the volunteers by word of mouth," says Ennis. He is able to fill the occasional vacancy with people who call or visit to inquire whether they can help. When some extra help is needed, it's announced in the bi-monthly newsletter to 8,000 Westside supporters.

Many volunteers are retirees

Ennis acknowledges that Westside has a couple of advantages in attracting and maintaining a large, skilled volunteer workforce. The main food bank facility in Surprise is new and provides a very pleasant working environment,

and it's located near several communities housing retired people with free time to contribute.

In fact, almost all of the volunteers at Westside are senior citizens who live nearby. Typically, they are retired professionals. Says Ennis, "People who have been successful in their own work life are the type of people we have here in their retirement years."

The volunteers are most visible in the food banks and local food pantries. That's where you'll see Jack and Barbara Kell.

Barbara has been volunteering her time at the Glendale food pantry—4 or 5 hours each week—for more than a year. Jack joined her last summer when he retired from a 27-year career as an electromechanical technician.

The Kells are community service veterans. Raising their four children they were involved with Boy and Girl Scouts, PTA, and 4-H, and they've always been active in their church. They donate their car and their time to provide transportation to residents of

nearby Senior Village.

"How much free time can you really use?" says Barbara. "We believe the good Lord put us here to go out in the world and help others. Some people give money or things. We enjoy this kind of one-on-one help better."

Volunteering has its own rewards

Herman Ebert, who is 84 years old, works two weekdays at the Glendale food pantry. Often he works at the reception desk, where he is the first point of contact for people coming in for help. He's been working at the food pantry for 8 years, and on the three weekdays he doesn't work at Glendale, Herman works as a volunteer teacher's aide.

Louise Henzler came to Arizona from New York 20 years ago when her husband retired. Almost immediately she volunteered to teach English. Now, she spends half a day each Tuesday, and occasionally a Thursday evening, at the new Westside facility.

Like many of the volunteers, Louise helps out in a number of different jobs. Sometimes she checks to make sure the food is fresh and ready for distribution. Other days, she spends her afternoons answering the phone, getting some filing done, and writing thank you notes to contributors.

Her concern for people is common among the volunteers. So is her desire to contribute. "You've got to see the people who come here for food," she says. "It's a blessing to be able to help."

The professionalism of Westside's volunteer staff has won the food bank recognition beyond Arizona's borders. But it means most to the families whose lives are made a little easier because the food bank is there.

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article and photos
by Tino Serrano

Shoppers at SHARE Buy Food For Less And Give More To Others

The trucks roll in formation along the loading docks and idle between the warehouses in the predawn fog. Voices on the intercom crackle orders to the truck drivers and to the workers in the warehouse.

For retired U.S. Army General Jim Dunham and his corps of 360 volunteers, it's D-Day, distribution day, at the SHARE food warehouse in Chicago. Before nightfall, more than 500,000 pounds of fresh produce and frozen meats will be transported by

trucks to 200 Chicago-area churches and agencies and into the kitchens of 10,000 people.

Dunham, an ordained deacon in Chicago's Catholic Archdiocese, oversees the operation of SHARE—Self Help and Resource Exchange—an unusual private food help program. The idea is this: If you're willing to work, you can buy food at a discount and contribute to your community at the same time.

Open to anyone—there are no income restrictions—SHARE gives local residents the opportunity to purchase, on a once-a-month basis, a nourishing well-balanced food package worth \$35 to \$45 dollars. They pay \$14 and commit 3 hours of time to volunteer service. Participants may pay for the food package with food stamps.

Last year, more than 110,000 families bought SHARE food packages and, together, contributed more than 382,882 volunteer hours of service.

Operating in several cities

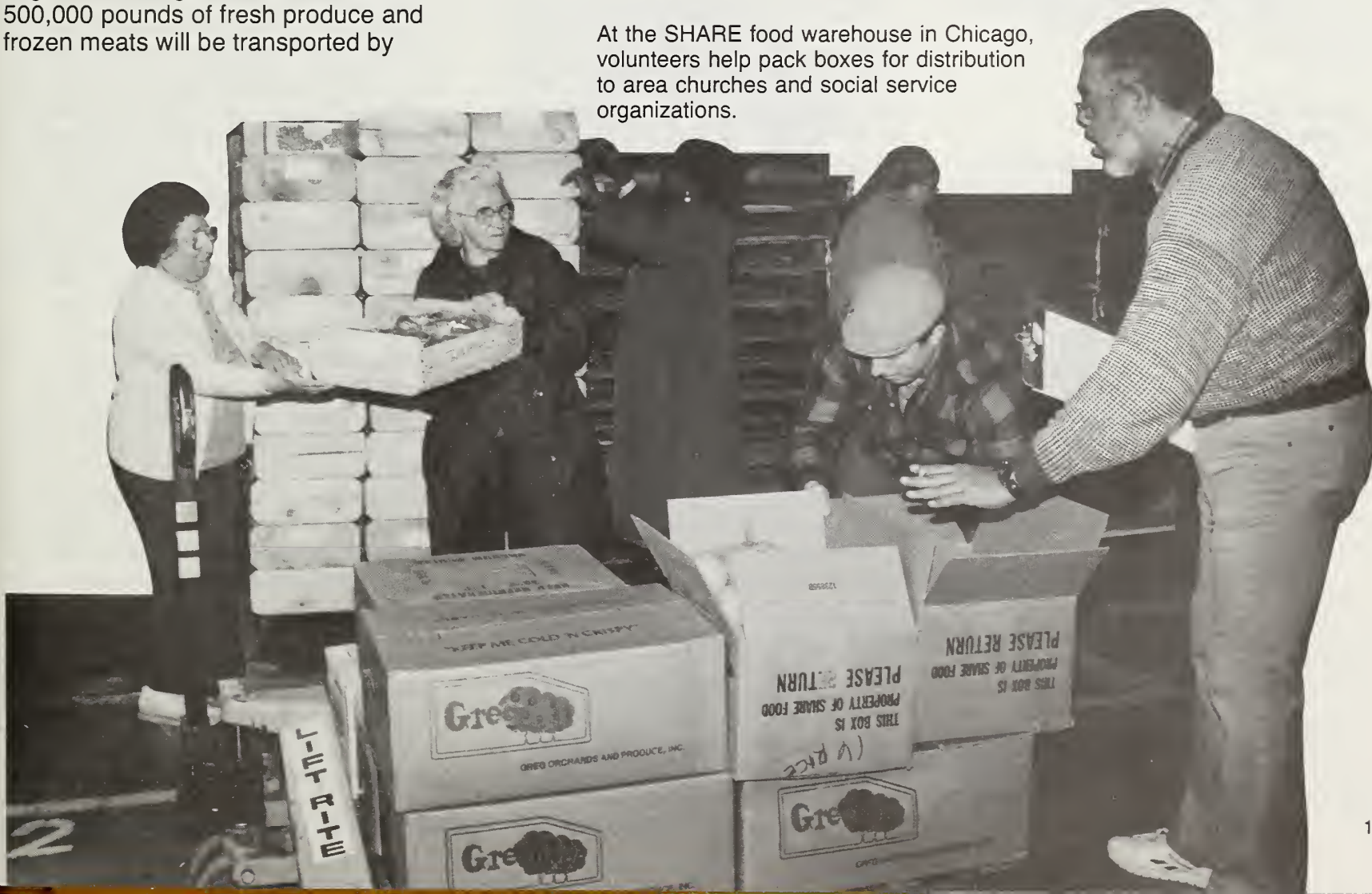
Established in San Diego in 1983 by former Chicago businessman Carl Shelton with seed money from the San Diego Catholic Diocese, SHARE has expanded nationwide to Phoenix; Minneapolis/St. Paul; Milwaukee; Philadelphia; New York City; Newark, New Jersey; Peoria, Illinois; and Christiansburg, Virginia.

Shelton, also a Catholic deacon, introduced his friend Jim Dunham to SHARE, who then proposed a SHARE program to the Chicago Archdiocese in 1984.

Dunham recruited two other deacons, Joshua Alves, a retired labor relations manager with Blue Cross, and former truck driver and United Parcel Service warehousing expert Phillip Disparte.

"With start-up grants from private manufacturers and a \$90,000 line of

At the SHARE food warehouse in Chicago, volunteers help pack boxes for distribution to area churches and social service organizations.



credit from the Archdiocese, we leased a warehouse," says Dunham.

"Our first month's distribution was 2,600 food packages. We tripled that the next month."

With no experience in dealing with food processors and food growers, Dunham says at first he operated "by guess and by God." Today, after 2 years and almost 1 million people served, Dunham has helped build a national network of food buyers and growers.

Dunham explains that some products are commercial overruns. Others, like pasta shells, may be specially manufactured for SHARE.

Sometimes, as Dunham explained in SHARE's monthly newsletter, "a producer is trying to break into an untapped market with a new product and may regard SHARE as a way to gain consumer recognition and acceptance" and offer the product at a low introductory cost to SHARE.

"We don't accept any donated foods," says Dunham. "It's important that people know this is not charity. We also don't want to compete for free food that should go to the food charities."

Packages contain variety of foods

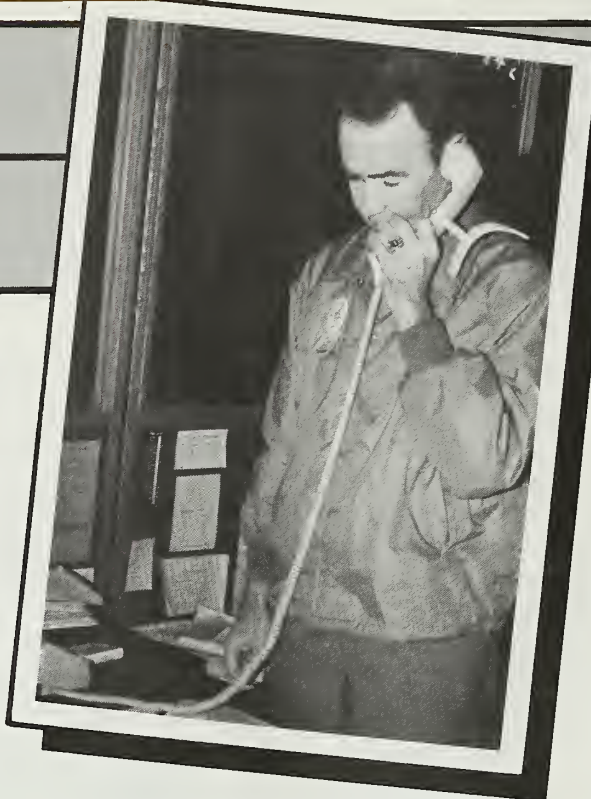
The packages contain a variety of foods. February's food package, for example, contained Italian sausage, chicken leg quarters, ground beef patties, ham hash, grapefruit, apples, carrots, broccoli, lettuce, canned pumpkin, rice, potatoes, corn tortillas, taco starter, and kiwi fruit.

"It's enough food to feed a family of four for a week," says Dunham.

Participant satisfaction with the food packages runs high—last month a survey showed a 97-percent satisfaction level. Occasionally, however, a product will cause some confusion.

One complaint concerned potatoes which when boiled turned green on the inside. Actually, they were not potatoes at all. "In our next newsletter, we cautioned about boiling the kiwi fruit," Dunham says.

From his glassed-in warehouse command post, Dunham watches volunteers load fresh carrots onto a pallet.



Jim Dunham oversees the operation of SHARE.

Everyone who buys a monthly food package also agrees to volunteer 3 hours doing some type of community service. Many decide to fulfill their commitment working at the warehouse on distribution day or at another local agency.

Volunteers are glad to help

Tony Ortiz works the night shift at a local General Electric plant. He purchases a food package every month and volunteers at the SHARE warehouse and the Latino Cultural Center where the food packages are distributed in his neighborhood. He is not a newcomer to volunteering.

"I like to help, always have," he says. "I volunteer at the high school, help out at lunchtime. I enjoy this."

So does Elvira Hopkins, who is busy loading bags of oranges. A mother of eight children, three still at home, she says the good food is just part of the reason she likes the SHARE idea.

"I really enjoy coming here and meeting people. I've made a lot of friends working and sharing with other people here," she says.

John Morelock says that although he's retired, he's not tired. A regular volunteer at a Hines Veterans Hospital, he buys three packages of SHARE food a month for himself, his son, and a friend.

"I buy a package for a friend of mine who is disabled. I do the volunteer work for her here at SHARE," he says. "It's amazing what a good idea this is,

and it's not charity."

For many of the SHARE participants that's important.

"We provide a service to people who are proud," says Dunham. "The majority of SHARE members are families either near or above the poverty line, with incomes in the \$12,000 to \$25,000 range."

"We are not terribly successful at feeding the indigent," he adds. "We're not here to solve all the problems of hunger, but we do recognize that there are a significant number of people above the poverty line who need help with food."

Neighbors help each other

A few miles from the SHARE warehouse, Bob Ceurvorst and his wife, Donna, coordinate SHARE volunteers at their parish, St. Anthony's church in Cicero, Illinois.

"This is more like a food buying cooperative than anything else," says Bob Ceurvorst. Donna agrees. "It gives people a chance to maintain their dignity and help out their community," she says.

According to Dunham, SHARE has two major goals—to improve nutrition for families, and to be a positive factor in the development of the community.

"Anyone can take part in SHARE," he says. "People are not only helping themselves, but they are helping their neighbors. We have affluent volunteers working side by side with impoverished volunteers. They get to know each other, so it's also a good cultural exchange."

"Many people say that SHARE is more than just a good food program. They say they feel like part of one big family."

Participation in SHARE nearly doubled last year. Dunham's goal this year is to double the SHARE family again.

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*article and photos
by Lawrence Rudman*

WIC Managers Make Changes That Make A Difference

New Incentive Funding Project Gets Results In Florida

Recognizing good work makes good business sense. And it's just as true in the public sector as it is in the private sector.

In Florida, the state WIC staff decided they needed a way to reward and encourage exceptional work among their local WIC agencies. What they came up with is an incentive funding project that allows local agencies to earn extra administrative monies for making management improvements in a number of key areas.

"Improving management at the local level is a national priority in the WIC program," says Jeannee Elswick, operations services manager for Florida's WIC program. "The Food and Nutrition Service, which administers WIC nationally, has been working with states on identifying ways to increase program efficiency.

"With our incentive funding project, we're rewarding local agencies that are doing a good job of bringing their programs in line with these priorities."

Priorities focus on several areas

Some of the priorities identified in FNS' WIC management improvement effort, called "Focus on Management," include: directing program benefits toward women and infants who are the highest health-risk clients; coordinating WIC clinic services with other related health services; and consolidating WIC clients' certification and nutrition education documents with other medical records.

WIC, officially known as the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, provides individually prescribed foods, along with nutrition education, to par-

ticipating mothers and children.

The program serves low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at risk because of health problems and poor diet.

There are approximately 40 local WIC agencies in Florida, serving more than 115,000 women, infants, and children. So far, 17 agencies have been approved for incentive funding this year.

"To qualify," Elswick explains, "local agencies must coordinate WIC clinic services with other related health services. They must also consolidate WIC certification and nutrition education documentation with all appropriate medical records.

"This may involve different changes for different agencies," she adds. "For example, some WIC operations may already be combined with health services. Some may need to make staffing changes or computerize their recordkeeping.

"We realize making improvements may entail some extra costs. That's one reason we're providing the extra funds, in addition to wanting to reward special efforts."

A look at one county's success

One of the 17 local WIC agencies approved by the state for incentive funding is Sarasota County, which the state staff feel is an outstanding example of successful management.

"Sarasota has accomplished all of our three goals," says Elswick. "They serve a large percentage of high-risk participants. They've improved their appointment system so that participants do not have long waits, and they have an excellent accounting and documentation system. They also have a very strong nutrition education program."

Sarasota is primarily a wealthy county with a high percentage of elderly people among the population of about 200,000. Because the local public hospital has no outpatient clinic, the health department is the primary

Sarasota County has one of Florida's best WIC programs. This mother and her baby are two of the many people helped through the Sarasota program.



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source of care for the medically indigent who live in Sarasota County and for the approximately 1,000 migrants who come to Sarasota each year.

Set in a comfortable new building in downtown Sarasota, the county public health department includes an adult clinic and a child health clinic with separate waiting areas for well and sick children. WIC services are offered as an integral part of maternal and child health services.

"The WIC program became part of the health department in 1977," says Mary Harding, who has been the nutrition director for the health department for almost 18 years.

"We started with 300 to 400 WIC participants who were already being served by the health department. In 1985, the program served an average of 950 participants per month. This year, the monthly average has been 1,000."

Harding and three nutritionists work with WIC in addition to other health department duties. Two cashiers and one clerk/specialist work only with WIC.

Many high-risk participants served

Sarasota's WIC caseload is almost evenly divided into one-third each of women, infants, and children and is considered medium-sized compared to other local WIC programs in the state.

Almost half of all participants are in the two highest risk groups of the six categories served in Florida. These are infants and pregnant or breastfeeding women who have medical problems, and the infants of women who were on WIC during pregnancy because of medical problems.

"The Sarasota County Health Department has always been a very integrated health unit," says Jeannee Elswick. "It offers a wide range of services and has a strong nutrition program. It was chosen by the Center for Disease Control as one of the sites for CDC's 1986 clinic management study."

The study looked at personnel utilization and patient flow in individual outpatient clinics. Then, computer simulations were done to see how adjustments could be made in clinic

scheduling and staffing and in the appointment system.

The main change for WIC and other clinic operations was to strictly enforce the patient scheduling system already in place. This was done throughout the health department, starting in October 1985, and resulted in more efficient use of staff time, lower costs and/or increased services in the clinics, and shorter waits for clients.

Changes benefit staff and participants

"Staff and participants feel positive about the change," says Harding. "Generally, people are on time for their appointments and are more likely to come because they know they won't have to wait very long."

"We give them a 15-minute grace period after their scheduled appointment time. After that, they must set up a new appointment, which may be that same day if they are willing to wait or can return later."

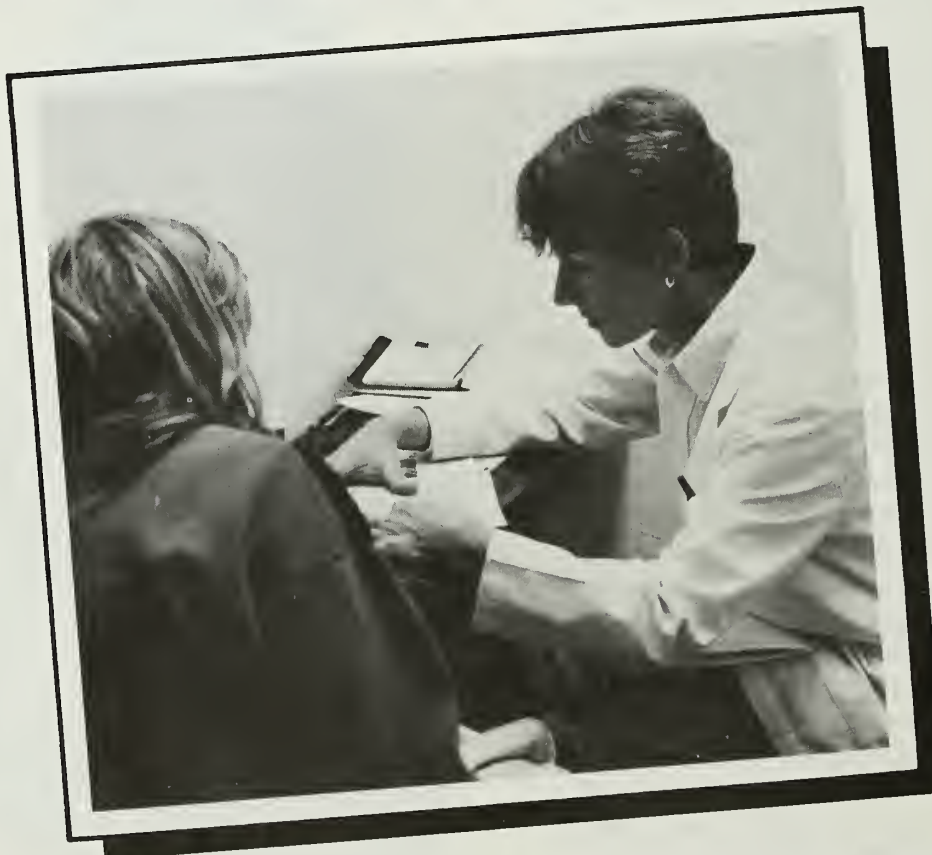
Since the health department began enforcing the appointment system, the

speed of WIC recertifications has increased because delays in laboratory time for test results have been virtually eliminated. The "walk-in" rate in the child health clinic has dropped from more than 90 percent to less than 1 percent. Waiting time in the maternity clinic has decreased by an average of 4 hours.

Because overall clinic flow is smoother, the staff find it easier to organize their time and maintain better documentation in patient files. The health department is now seeing more patients, partly because of improved appointment scheduling and partly because of increased demand for services.

"I've worked with WIC for 3 years," says public health nutritionist Claudia Eberly. "Since the appointment system has been enforced, I've noticed that participants are much better about keeping their appointments, which includes their time with me."

"Because they don't feel so frustrated by waiting, they are more recep-



At the Sarasota County Health Department, registered dietitian Renee Smith counsels a young woman recently certified for WIC.

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tive to the nutrition information I give them, and both of us feel less rushed."

Nutrition education program is strong

The Sarasota WIC program excels in nutrition education. Nutrition counseling is an integral part of the prenatal and child health clinic services. Eberly gives pediatric nutrition counseling to mothers whose children and infants are on the WIC program.

Nutrition education and WIC certification information are documented in each client's medical record.

"We try to see high-risk participants every 2 months," Eberly explains. "I have a special card file for those participants, and I check the file every month to note who needs to see the nutritionist. I put a tag on those persons' issuance cards so that when they come to pick up their vouchers, they will be told to see me."

Participants receive nutrition messages and handouts with their WIC vouchers. Each month, Eberly meets with the WIC cashiers, who distribute the vouchers, to train them on the latest nutrition topic. Some recent topics included introducing solid food to infants, and "bottle mouth syndrome," which can result from letting babies keep bottles in their mouths for long periods of time.

Communication and planning are stressed

In all parts of the program, communication among the health department staff is excellent. The nutrition staff meets at least monthly, and Mary Harding meets every Monday with staff dietitians. She meets every other week with the WIC clerical staff to check their nutrition communication skills.

"It is vital for nutritionists to employ principles of planning in working with the WIC program," says Harding. "It's important to review community needs and compare those to staff capabilities to determine practical goals for nutrition service delivery. There must be built-in check points to be sure that everything is working properly.

"Good planning is the basis of a successful program, and I feel that is what



Public health nutritionist Claudia Eberly meets with a WIC mother and her young son. The baby's brother (pictured above) also participates in WIC.

we have here. We have open communication throughout the agency, which is also essential.

"I know it takes time to do followup with staff through memos, notes, and phone calls. But good documentation is necessary to run the program and ensure that participants are best served."

An improved accounting and data collection system makes it easier for Sarasota staff to carefully document WIC costs and services. All health department data are collected by clinic to show where specific services are provided. This makes it possible to document WIC program costs that exceed the local administrative grant.

"The Sarasota WIC program is one of Florida's best," says Jeannee Elswick. "It sets a good example for other local WIC agencies, who will feel encouraged to apply for incentive funding."

Elswick is pleased with the results of the incentive funding project and with the attention the project is getting nationally.

"The results have been so positive," she says, "information on the project was shared with other states at the National Association of WIC Directors' meeting in March.

"It's nice to think this idea may be used to encourage improvements and greater efficiency in local WIC agencies everywhere."

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*article and photos
by Catherine Rogers*

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Alaska Staff Team Up With The U.S. Mail To Reach Rural Participants



Emily Slana lives on the Arctic Circle, 150 miles from the closest store stocking WIC foods. But she and her children still benefit from the nutritious food provided through the WIC program.

Emily is one of more than 350 women and young children who receive WIC foods and nutrition information the same way many rural Alaskans do much of their shopping—through the U.S. mail. Once a month, Emily picks up her WIC package at the Fort Yukon post office, 2 miles from her home.

A response to special needs

For several years, the state agency that runs Alaska's WIC program was unable to reach those living in remote areas. Mary Rikken-Ver, state WIC coordinator, says that while the program was working well in cities and in rural areas with well-stocked stores, stores in remote areas found it difficult, and expensive, to maintain supplies of the specified WIC foods.

In April 1985, the state WIC office began using parcel post—commonly used in Alaska—to deliver food and nutrition education materials to WIC participants in areas with few or no stores. Today, nearly 10 percent of Alaska's 4,000 WIC participants are reached this way.

Enrolling eligible mothers and children is a cooperative process. Health care providers visiting rural areas make health and nutrition assessments

and provide potential participants with applications. WIC staff in Juneau review the applications and health information and enroll applicants who qualify.

Distributors in Anchorage and Juneau mail the food packages. State staff order participants' packages monthly and provide the distributors with nutrition education and food preparation information to send with the WIC foods.

Becky Carrillo, who oversees the ordering and shipping, varies the kinds of juices and cereals, and alternates dried beans with peanut butter. To keep costs down and avoid damage to food, the state substitutes powdered eggs and dried or evaporated milk for the conventional fresh foods.

Mailing is an economical choice

Food package costs for those in rural areas not on the mail delivery program are high, making the mail-out system an economical choice for Alaska's WIC program. Costs for the parcel post package, including postage, range from \$29 to \$49 for child and adult packages, and from \$43 to \$53 for infant packages. Purchasing the same foods in rural stores can run as much as \$20 more per person.

The concept for the mail-order system, called the "Alternate Food Delivery System," was first tried by the local WIC office in Nome to serve clients in nearby villages, using an Anchorage

vendor more than 500 miles away.

State staff learned of the parcel post option during a regular monitoring visit to Nome in 1984. They were surprised that stores would be willing to ship the relatively small quantities monthly to WIC participants, and realized an arrangement similar to the one in Nome would give them new opportunities to reach people in remote areas throughout the state.

"We had wanted to serve more rural people but had no way of reaching many potential clients," says Rikken-Ver.

Although the program is now serving more people, the cost of administering it has not increased. Federal funding compensates for the increased caseload, and because the administrative work is centralized in the state office in Juneau, there are no travel costs.

Questionnaires sent every other month

The state staff make special efforts to make sure the alternate food delivery system is working smoothly.

Participants receive a questionnaire every other month with their food packages, enabling the staff to check that the correct items were sent and arrived in good condition. The questionnaires sometimes come back with information on clients' preferences, which the staff try to honor.

State managers are also careful to tailor nutrition information materials to participants' needs and their familiarity with the foods.

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Jeanne Jones, who prepares most of the nutrition education materials sent to rural participants, says, "Most Native Alaskans are unfamiliar with dried beans, so we include recipes and nutrition education materials that discuss the preparation and nutritional value of the beans. With the first food package shipment, we also include information on using dried eggs."

Mary Rikken-Ver and her staff are pleased with the success of the new system.

"We had to come up with a unique solution to solve the special problems of administering a program in a state where 40 percent of the population is in rural areas, spread over an area equal to one-fifth of the whole U.S.," says Rikken-Ver.

"Although every system has some problems, we feel this solution has gone a long way in reaching people in the rural areas who need the supplemental food help WIC offers."

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*article by Dee Amaden
photos by Alaska WIC staff*

Becky Carrillo (below) arranges for WIC foods to be sent to remote areas. The packages go by freight plane to large towns, then by twin engine planes to small villages.



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Cooperation And Creativity Characterize Indiana Program

Henry County was the first rural county in Indiana to offer a WIC program. The guiding force behind the program's inception was county nutritionist Olene Veach, who in the past 10 years has built a dynamic operation with some especially imaginative nutrition education activities.

As nutritionist for the county's Maternal and Child Health Program (MCH), Veach became interested in WIC in the late 1970's. She saw a role for WIC and felt it would not only provide needed foods, but also reinforce nutrition education.

"I helped write the grant proposal for WIC," she says, "but I had no idea I'd be the one involved in running it."

Born and raised in Henry County, Veach had earned a bachelor's degree in vocational home economics and a masters degree in nutrition. She was well qualified for the nutritionist position and also understood the cultural and economic patterns of the area. Currently, she is both WIC coordinator and MCH nutritionist for Henry County.

Henry County, which has a population of 53,336, has only one major city, New Castle. Approximately half of county residents live in communities of less than 2,500. Farming and small manufacturing companies are the major sources of income.

The residential pattern of the low-income population is migratory in nature. Most of these residents come from Appalachia and tend to return to that region periodically.

WIC services are well coordinated

Henry County WIC facilities are not elaborate, but they are cheerful and inviting to a caseload of 750 women, infants, and children. Posters, wall displays, bulletin boards, and pamphlets are displayed to teach nutrition concepts. There are also short film presentations.

There was no money allocated for furniture in the WIC budget, but WIC staff were able to salvage some metal storage cabinets from another agency and secure used school armchair desks to furnish the workshop area.

Veach attributes much of the success of the clinic "to an extremely cooperative staff who work together and are willing to learn more about nutrition."

Assistants Sheri Burgess and Sharon Williamson help with work-

shops and client interviews. Secretary Betty Walker schedules appointments, completes necessary records, and also helps with certification. An in-service training program has helped staff members develop new skills and expand their nutrition knowledge.

Veach is well known in the community for her work with many service organizations. Often if she feels a WIC participant could be helped by one of these organizations, she will make a referral.

"I know most of the directors of the agencies on a first-name basis," she says, "and I often call before I send someone over."

Activities help in many ways

Veach says she is interested in helping "people to be self-sufficient—to do more for themselves than they otherwise could do." She likes to involve the whole family and the community when possible.

A garden project is one way Veach is helping WIC participants become self-reliant. "The garden was a take-off from the 4-H garden seed program,"



As her child looks on, a WIC mother has a blood sample taken from her finger. This is done to check her hemoglobin level.



Henry County WIC director Olene Veach (left and above) and assistant Sheri Burgess talk with a WIC mother and her children.

she says, "and Cooperative Extension helped by providing information."

Seeds were ordered in bulk in March, and WIC participants were encouraged to purchase seed kits for \$2.00. At planting time, a canning factory in the town provided five tomato plants for each person in a family. WIC clients were given information on how to plant, grow, and use the vegetables in meals. They also received information on the nutrients the vegetables contain.

"With a project like this," says Veach, "lots of people who have never gardened will try, and long after they are off WIC, they will still grow some of their own food. It gives them a real sense of pride." Last year, more than 200 people participated in the project.

In another family-oriented activity last year, many WIC participants and their families volunteered to walk a mile in the March of Dimes walk-a-thon. They received helium-filled balloons, cookies, and juice. "It was a good family outing, it didn't cost money, and it built good community relationships," says Veach.

Nutrition workshops are held monthly

Workshops on nutrition are held monthly for WIC participants. Periodic evaluations allow participants to make suggestions at any time during the

year. New workshops on choking and on food safety related to preparation and storage were developed in 1985.

A total of 69 workshops were held for parents and children last year. Veach says parent-child workshops are popular and have proven to be effective.

At workshops, mothers are encouraged to have children help in meal preparation by using large bowls, color-coded measuring cups, and easy-to-prepare recipes. This not only teaches nutrition but also helps build positive mother-child relationships.

"Another way we cover current issues is in our monthly newsletter, which also includes menu suggestions for good nutrition," says Veach. "The older children who come along to the clinic receive a monthly coloring sheet with a children's recipe on the back."

"Nutrition education materials are revised or discontinued as the need indicates," Veach adds. "Recently, we found that the 20-minute videotapes used in our waiting room were too long. We are working on two new series of tapes—'Children for WIC' and 'Prenatal Care'—which will be in 4- to 6-minute segments."

Home visits also helpful

Although no time or money is set aside for home visits, Veach manages

to visit two or three WIC homes each month on her own time. "It helps me understand the situations better," she says.

"If there is no phone or if I had observed insecurity in the mother prior to delivery, I try to visit her during the first week after the baby is born," Veach continues.

Home visits are also conducted when possible with participants who have extremely low-income, chronic medical problems, or other special situations.

Veach feels WIC has contributed a great deal to Henry County. "Years ago, we saw anemia in 60 to 70 percent of the kids," she says. "We could tell mothers what to feed their children, but often people could not afford to buy these foods. The WIC food package became a tool to reinforce what we were teaching."

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